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MEMORANDUM FOR Brian Monaghan
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Attention: Management Training Branch
 Field Division

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Subject: Service-Based Enumeration Observation Trip Report

INTRODUCTION

I visited Fort Worth, Texas from March 27 through March 29 to observe Service-Based Enumeration (SBE). The SBE is a three-day operation used to enumerate people without housing who may be missed in the traditional enumeration of housing units and group quarters. Shelters were visited by enumerators on March 27 and soup kitchens were visited on the March 28. On the early morning of March 29 (4:00 a.m. - 7:00 a.m.), an enumeration at targeted non-sheltered outdoor locations was planned. Due to a tornado that hit downtown Fort Worth on the evening of March 28, the early morning enumeration on March 29 was postponed until April 1.

OBSERVATIONS

Shelter Enumeration - March 27

There were seven shelters that were visited by census enumerators on March 27 in Fort Worth. Just one was a morning enumeration while the others occurred in late afternoon or evening. I visited two of these shelters.

The first shelter I visited was a children's shelter. The crew leader informed me that there were 11 children, approximately aged 9-16, at the shelter to be counted which she had verified earlier that day. When we arrived at the shelter, the shelter staff was very concerned about giving out the full names of the children for confidentiality reasons. The crew leader assured that the information

they gave was confidential but the staff proceeded to call a state government official to determine if the full names could be given. In the end, the full names of the children were provided on the questionnaires. The crew leader was surprised by the confidentiality problem because it should have been covered in the advance visit and mentioned that the shelter employee who was there during the advance visit was not present on this particular day. The enumerators began to fill out the listing sheet with the names of the children provided by the shelter and placed the appropriate questionnaire (long or short) into an envelope with the child's name on it while the staff at the shelter announced that representatives from the Census Bureau were there to count them. This met with much discontent from the children. They had many questions about the Census and the crew leader did a good job of explaining it to them. While handing out the questionnaires, one boy refused. The crew leader asked him all the information on the short form that he would have received anyway and they were careful to mark the JIC box accordingly after an enumerator filled out his questionnaire. They were able to get full information from all other children, including the two who received the long form. Some children required help from the enumerators or shelter staff in order to complete their questionnaire. The enumeration, lasting about 40 minutes, seemed to take longer than the shelter staff would have liked and they hurried the crew leader and her enumerators toward the end as well as one boy who was finishing his long form questionnaire. The task of enumerating a children's shelter is not entirely clear. It states in the training that enumerators should fill out the questionnaires for "people unable to respond for themselves" and when present, parents should fill out the questionnaires for their children. The children at the shelter could have been classified as "people unable to respond for themselves" but there is no mention of a minimal age of respondents in the training. Most of the children had no problems filling out their own questionnaires and the questions that were asked were commonly asked questions of all age groups. Both children with the long form received help from either shelter staff or an enumerator. The ambiguous wording in the training leaves this particular situation up to the interpretation of the crew leader.

Considering that this was the first shelter that this crew leader and group of enumerators visited, they did a very good job. They were prepared with all materials that were needed for this shelter. This particular group worked very well together and each person was responsible for a different part of the process. After the enumeration was complete, they discussed ways to make the enumeration of their second and larger shelter flow more smoothly.

The second shelter I visited was a very large shelter that had the maximum capacity of 550 people. There was a group of men, a group of women and children, and a group of veterans that stayed in the shelter on more than a day-to-day basis. Others would congregate outside in the late afternoon or early evening and wait until the doors would open at 5:00 p.m. They were served a meal and then could stay there for the evening.

When I arrived to this shelter, the doors had not been opened yet for the people congregated outside to go in. I observed many teams of enumerators attempting to get individuals to fill out questionnaires. They had varying degrees of success with some enumerators getting an entire group of people to fill out questionnaires while other enumerators got many refusals. I learned at

this time that there were groups of enumerators already inside the shelter enumerating the men, women, and children who stay there on a regular basis. By the time I made my way inside the shelter, this enumeration was just about complete. I spoke with some of the enumerators who performed the enumeration of the more permanent residents of the shelter and they said that they got almost full cooperation from them and very few refusals. Other enumerators, responsible for enumerating persons staying on a day-to-day basis, continued their attempt to get people to fill out a questionnaire after the doors were open. Some enumerators tried to get shelter clients to take a questionnaire as they were in line waiting to get their meal and others concentrated on clients already eating their meals. It appeared that those people who were eating were more cooperative in filling out a questionnaire. This may have to do with the fact that they had a table to write on and it was a more comfortable situation. Enumerators continued to be persistent in asking everyone if they had filled out a questionnaire and when asked, close to the end of the first major influx of people into the shelter, many said that they had already done so. It could not be determined if they were telling the truth or not and some enumerators expressed frustration in this. When an individual completely refused to take a questionnaire, enumerators did complete approximate age, sex, and race for that person on a questionnaire.

The enumeration at this shelter seemed to go relatively well. The more permanent residents of the shelter were easier for the enumerators to distribute forms to and get favorable responses. People who visited the shelter on a day-to-day basis were much more difficult to enumerate. I found that some shelter clients were questioned by multiple enumerators as to whether they had been counted. This practice seemed to annoy those asked but with the set-up of the shelter with much movement of people throughout, it was inevitable. The possibility of counting one person more than once in this shelter was significant, especially if the potential respondent refused and last resort information was obtained by multiple enumerator teams. One enumerator suggested that it would have been better if enumerators could have handed out questionnaires to shelter clients inside the shelter at tables before the meal was served. This is not how the shelter normally conducts business but it may have created a more controlled environment for the enumerators.

Soup Kitchen Enumeration- March 28

There were five soup kitchens that were visited by enumerators on March 28 in Fort Worth. Fort Worth had no mobile food vans.

The first soup kitchen I visited was handing out sack lunches. Clients of the soup kitchen were coming and going on a flow basis when I arrived. Enumerators were set up on the sidewalk outside the entrance to the soup kitchen. They did a good job of confronting all who passed by and attempting to interview them. They often asked if the person had already been counted and many people responded that they had been the night before at a shelter or at their homes. Enumerators did not attempt to interview people who responded in this manner. Furthermore, it was very easy for potential respondents to just say that they had been counted and be left alone by the enumerator even if this was not the case. I learned during my observation that they did not have enough ICQs to complete the enumeration and had resorted to using ICRs. The crew leader discussed this with

me and said that they had many problems getting necessary materials in a timely manner. He was aware that the wrong form was being used and planned to transcribe the information they collected on the ICRs onto ICQs when they returned to the office. While this was a good plan given the situation, when using an ICR to enumerate a person at a soup kitchen, they missed Question 9 (Including today, how many days during the past 7 days did you receive a meal from a soup kitchen or mobile food van?) on the ICQ. This question is the multiplicity estimator and for this particular soup kitchen, this information was lost for part of the population.

The second soup kitchen I visited was also a sack lunch program and very similar to the first soup kitchen. The crew leader for this soup kitchen was extremely well organized and made sure that all her enumerators were aware of what they should be doing at all times. As with the first soup kitchen, I observed potential respondents saying they had already been enumerated and enumerators not attempting to interview them. If a person refused, enumerators got last resort information. When a name was not provided by a respondent, the crew leader instructed her enumerators to write "No Name" in the first name field. One enumerator was responsible for handing out forms (they had ICQs) to other enumerators and keeping the listing sheet up to date. When a respondent did not provide a name, she would write down a description of the person in the name section of the listing sheet. I observed this soup kitchen at a slow time so I am not sure how well this worked as it got busier but thought it was a reasonable way they could attempt to keep from counting one person more than once.

The last soup kitchen I visited served lunch after a church service. At the beginning of the service, two enumerators spoke (one in English and the other in Spanish) to the 40-50 clients there that day to explain that the Census Bureau was there to count them. After the service, clients lined up to get their meal. The crew leader and her approximately 15 enumerators were seated at a long row of tables on one side of the room and expected the clients to come up to the table after they finished eating to be enumerated. This set-up was not what I expected to see and led to little cooperation from the soup kitchen clients. Only three people were willing to be fully enumerated at this soup kitchen and they proceeded to complete their own ICQ when the enumerators should have been interviewing them and filling out the ICQ accordingly. All other clients of the soup kitchen, when finished their lunch, promptly left without being interviewed by an enumerator. The crew leader had two enumerators at the door who were responsible for getting last resort information on those who left. Getting only last resort information for the majority of the clients completely hinders the unduplication process. A portion of this group was likely counted twice because they were enumerated at a shelter the night before and then last resort information was the only information collected from them at the soup kitchen. It was obvious to me, even before the enumeration of this soup kitchen began, that the crew leader's plan was not going to be successful. After the enumeration began, it became obvious to her also but she did nothing to change her procedures. This enumeration had the potential of being much more effective had the crew leader been a bit more flexible.

CONCLUSIONS

I feel that the SBE operations went relatively well in Fort Worth. The experience of seeing these operations first-hand provided me with insight that cannot be gained from reading any number of materials on the subject. The biggest problem overall was the late delivery of materials which made training difficult, created last minute scrambles, and caused some parts of the enumeration to be done incorrectly. In most cases, crew leaders and enumerators made an honest attempt to do their jobs to the best of their ability. However, I have a few suggestions that may improve future enumerations of this type.

I was not able to observe training but feel that it needs to be emphasized that collecting only last resort information on a person that may have been counted previously results in that person being counted twice since there is no way to unduplicate these persons. While last resort information is, at times, the only type of information that is obtainable, every attempt should be made to gain further information.

Another suggestion is to give the crew leaders more direction in how the enumeration should be conducted. At the large shelter I visited, I saw many teams of enumerators who seemed to be working independently of each other. This enumeration may have been more successful if each team of enumerators had a certain area in the shelter for which they were responsible instead of a big group of enumerators all in one place. Also, at the last soup kitchen I visited, the crew leader's plan for enumeration made it very easy for soup kitchen clients to leave without any interaction with the enumerators. I doubt if this was the way she had been trained for enumerating a soup kitchen and wondered how she came up with this particular plan. While some enumerations need to be performed in a different manner, this soup kitchen posed no such situation. Allowing crew leaders too much flexibility in how an enumeration is conducted can lead to disappointing results.

cc: DSSD Census 2000 Procedures and Operations Memorandum Series
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